

Message Text

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TO AMEMBASSY OTTAWA
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ALL CANADIAN CONSGEN BY POUCH

UNCLAS WINNIPEG 0023

E.O. 11652: N/A
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SUBJECT: UNITY TASK FORCE -- NO WARM RECEPTION IN MANITOBA

1. NATIONAL UNITY TASK FORCE WAS MET BY LARGE AND VOLATILE CROWDS
AT PUBLIC HEARINGS IN WINNIPEG JANUARY 12 - 13. ONE OF FORCES'
STAFF MEMBERS DESCRIBED SESSIONS AS MOST NEGATIVE OF ANY ON ITS
NATIONAL TOUR.

2. MOST PUBLICIZED POSITION WAS TAKEN BY MANITOBA M.P.
JAMES RICHARDSON WHO LEFT TRUDEAU CABINET A YEAR AGO IN DISPUTE
OVER BILINGUALISM. RICHARDSON WENT ON NATIONAL SPEAKING TOUR
SHORTLY AFTER RESIGNATION TO TRY AND EXPLAIN HIS VIEW WHICH ARE
DECIDEDLY ANGLOPHONE. AS EMBASSY WILL RECALL AT THAT TIME HIS
WAS A VOICE IN THE WILDERNESS. NOW, HOWEVER, RICHARDSON SEEMS
TO BE PICKING UP SOME ENTUSIASTIC SUPPORT OF HIS POSITION
THAT THERE IS ONLY ONE NATIONAL LANGUAGE AND ONE REGIONAL LANGUAGE
AND NOT TWO EQUAL LANGUAGES.

3. TRUDEAU, ACCORDING TO RICHARDSON, HAS MADE FOUR FUNDAMENTAL
MISTAKES:

-- HIS EFFORTS TO BUILD A COUNTRY BASED ON TWO FOUNDING RACES
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INSTEAD OF ON UNITY,

-- HIS BELIEF INCREASED USE OF FRENCH WILL BOLSTER NATIONAL UNITY,

-- HIS BELIEF THAT MORE POWER FOR QUEBEC WILL DISCOURAGE THAT
PROVINCE TO BREAKAWAY, AND

-- HIS BELIEF THAT ENTRENCHING FRENCH LANGUAGE RIGHTS IN THE CONSTITUTION WILL HELP CREATE NATIONAL UNITY.

4. TASK FORCE HEARINGS HAVE GIVEN IMPETUS TO SPECULATION THAT RICHARDSON MAY RUN AS CONSERVATIVE IN THE NEXT FEDERAL ELECTION. THIS SEEMS UNLIKELY UNLESS TORIES WERE TO TAKE NOTE OF HIS VIEWS ON NATIONAL UNITY. IN ANY EVENT, RICHARDSON SAYS HE WILL NOT RPT NOT RUN AS LIBERAL.

5. NEW MANITOBA TORY GOVERNMENT MADE LOW KEY PRESENTATION AND OFFERED NO NEW PANACEA. FORMER PREMIER SCHREYER MADE ONE OF MOST MOVING STATEMENTS IN SUPPORT OF UNITY WHILE ADMITTING THAT IN DOING SO MANITOBANS MIGHT LABEL HIM "A STARRY-EYED OPTIMIST" SINCE HE BELIEVES "CANADIANS HAVE DONE SO WELL IN MAKING PROGRESS TOWARD MUTUAL RESPECT.

6. MANY SPEAKERS EMPHASIZED THAT THEIR CONCERN IS NOT SO MUCH OVER LANGUAGE AND CULTURE AS OVER THE ECONOMIC DISADVANTAGE WHICH THE WEST HAS IN COMPARISON WITH THE "FAMILIES OF THE WINDSOR-MONTREAL CORRIDOR". HOWEVER, WINNIPEG CHAMBER OF COMMERCE POLL OF 3,000 OF ITS MEMBERS INDICATED THAT "WINNIPEGGERS ARE NOT AS REDNECK AS SOME MIGHT ASSUME". A MAJORITY (80 PERCENT) SAID A QUEBEC SEPARATION WOULD HAVE A NEGATIVE EFFECT ON CANADA, WHILE 75 PERCENT THOUGHT IT WOULD HAVE A BAD EFFECT ON MANITOBA.

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7. TASK FORCE MEMBERS NOTED SPECIAL ADVANCES MANITOBA HAS ACHIEVED IN MULTI-CULTURALISM, BUT COULD NOT HAVE HELPED BUT BE IMPRESSED, PERHAPS IN A NEGATIVE WAY, ABOUT THE OFTEN VITRIOLIC FEELING THAT PEOPLE IN THE WEST OF CANADA HAVE ABOUT QUEBEC AND SIMULTANEOUSLY, THE EASTERN ESTABLISHMENT.
HUTSON

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